HYBRID WIDGET/LAYOUT USER INTERFACE FOR STRUCTURED INFORMATION

Abstract of Disclosure

Imagine an old-style typewriter where the typist's actions affect a fixed focal area, with the paper scrolling through this region. This invention presents a similar interface for content editing where the primary window is split into three panes stacked on top of each other. The center or focus pane uses a widget-based approach such that plenty of room is available for large lists, edit areas, calendar controls, and other useful information manipulation widgets. The other two panes, one above and one below the focus pane use the layout-based approach. This maintains the user's context during data entry; layouts above and below indicate the user's position within the data structure but while the user's attention can remain focused at the central position on the screen where data editing occurs. Furthermore, by replacing the bottom or top content pane with help information, this invention provides help information directly adjacent to the widget to which it applies solving the proximity problem faced by all other approaches and it does so without content resizing or shaking the user's context. The overall result blends the strong points of the context preserving layout-based approach, the powerful editing capabilities of the widget-based approach and effective proximity-based coaching with surprisingly few drawbacks